

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Texas	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Military and Theme XV, Westward Expansion, subtheme: Indian Affairs
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Fort Davis	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 100
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Jeff Davis County, State 118, north edge of town of Fort Davis	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Estate of D. A. Simmons, 3100 Gulf Bldg., Houston, Texas	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

Named for Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, Fort Davis was established in 1854 by Lt. Col. Washington Sewell, in the Davis Mountains northwest of the Big Bend. Its function was to help check predatory bands of Apaches and Comanches, who could be intercepted from this point at the various crossings of the Rio Grande. The site was noted for its healthy climate, defensibility, and communication with El Paso and San Antonio by a fine, natural road. Located on the southern route to California, the fort provided a way-station for California-bound immigrants. From 1854 to 1861, Col. Sewell's command, operating from Fort Davis, fought the hostile Comanches and Apaches infesting the region. In 1858 a train of camels, with which the War Department was experimenting in the Southwest, stopped at Fort Davis. The garrison withdrew in 1861, and Confederates under Col. John R. Baylor occupied the post, but remained only a few months. The fort was deserted until U.S. troops returned in 1867, to find that the old establishment, primarily of log construction, had been all but wrecked by Indians. They built a new post, using substantial rock and adobe materials. Until 1880 it was a base of operations against Kiowas and Comanches, and played a prominent part in the wars against Victorio and the Warm Springs Apaches. It continued to serve as an important stop on the roads to Mexico and California, and as the mother post of many scattered subposts. The Indian barrier removed, cattlemen moved into the area in the 1880's and established ranches. The post had outlived its usefulness, and was abandoned in 1891.

The remains of Fort Davis are probably more extensive and impressive than any other frontier post in the West, including Forts Laramie and Union. The walls of nine sets of adobe officers quarters are still standing, several with roofs intact. Seven other sets of officers quarters, of slab limestone construction, are in excellent condition, complete with roofs. Three of these, however, have been rehabilitated and are now used as guest cottages. On the opposite side of the parade ground stand the roofless walls of two long adobe barracks. The adobe commissary and barrack-like shop, together

(Continued on Supplemental Sheet)

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) C. C. Rister, <u>The Southwestern Frontier, 1865-1881</u> (Cleveland, 1928). Barry Scobee, <u>The Story of Fort Davis</u> (Fort Davis, 1936). J. B. & J. R. Toulouse, <u>Pioneer Posts of Texas</u> (San Antonio, 1934). War Dept., <u>A Report on the Hygiene of the U.S. Army, with Descriptions of Military Posts</u>, Circular No. 8 (Washington, 1875).			
9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, UABS, etc.) None			

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Guest ranch	13. DATE OF VISIT Oct. 20, 1958
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Robert M. Zelle</i>	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE Dec. 16, 1958	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE

Texas

NAME(S) OF SITE

Fort Davis

7. Importance and Description (cont'd)

with the ruins of numerous utility buildings and other miscellaneous structures, complete the physical layout. It is picturesquely located in the heart of the Davis Mountains near the Davis Mountains State Park.

A private concern operates a guest ranch on the site under lease from the D. A. Simmons estate. On the date of visit the lease, according to a local informant, had two years to run. The Fort Davis Historical Society, which has long been active in attempting to preserve the fort and secure its admission to the National Park System, operates a small museum and trading post in a building that has been constructed for the purpose on the northeast edge of the parade ground. The property is for sale, but because of its historical value, the price has been set, according to Mr. Barry Scobee, at \$110,000 for something over 400 acres. Mr. Scobee, Justice of the Peace in Fort Davis and author of the book cited below, is a moving spirit in the effort to have the fort made a National Monument. According to Mr. Scobee, the spring winds each year do considerable damage, and stabilization is urgently needed.